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WAR CABINET.

JOINT PLANNING STAFF.

6

SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE.

Report by the Joint Planning Staff.

In anticipation of the instructions of the Chiefs of Staff we have reviewed the proposals put forward by the Minister of Economic Warfare in C.O.S.(41) 147(O). Our comments are as follows:-

2. The plan falls into two distinct parts:

(i) Organisation of subversive propaganda and other subversive activities including sabotage.

(ii) Organisation of secret armies.

Subversive Propaganda and other Subversive Activities.

3. We believe that these can play a most important part in our offensive against German economic life and morale. Sabotage may be a most valuable complement to the bombing efforts of the R.A.F., particularly in attacking targets where there is no secondary objective, e.g. very small targets and targets in occupied areas. Sabotage should therefore be directed chiefly in accordance with the bombing policy aim.

4. In Poland and Czechoslovakia a highly organised sabotage force already exists and supplies sent there could be used at once. In the other countries concerned it will however be necessary first to build up the organisation to a state when supplies could be utilised. We think therefore that an over-estimate has been made of the arms and equipment to be delivered during the first six months to countries other than Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Secret Armies.

5. If the British Army is to return to the Continent in the final stages of the war, the assistance of local patriot forces will be essential at some period of the operations. Our expeditionary force would be enormously assisted if part of these local patriot forces were previously secretly organised and armed, so that they could be employed effectively in interrupting communications, attacking aerodromes, and other diversionary operations from the commencement of our attacks on the Continent. We agree that secret armies can only operate effectively if supported by fully equipped forces; their organisation therefore should be limited to those areas where our offensive is possible.

6. For reasons of fighter support and shipping, our main Continental offensive can only be launched across the Channel. Norway appears at present to be the most suitable area for any subsidiary operations which may be desirable. Priority in the organisation of secret armies should therefore be given to Northern France, Belgium and Holland, in that order.

7. It appears, however, that in these countries no attempt has yet been made to organise patriot forces as secret armies. Until some progress has first been made in the organisation there must be considerable doubt regarding the practicability of this part of the scheme.

8. The aim of the programme therefore, should be to introduce in the early stages organisers and means of communication, but delivery of arms and equipment should not commence before the organisation has been adequately built up.

9. The target date by which these Secret Armies would be ready is given as the autumn of 1942. We are very doubtful whether this is in fact practicable. A better estimate will only be possible in the light of progress made in establishing the organisation.

Provided the necessary agents and wireless sets are introduced during the winter 1941/42, the programme could well be reconsidered in the spring of 1942.

10. We regard Norway as a special case. In view of the fact that it is likely to be the scene only of a subsidiary operation, it should rank in priority below Northern France, Belgium and Holland. On the other hand, considerable progress has already been made there in the organisation of a secret army and it is feared that, unless further assistance is made during this winter, enthusiasm will be destroyed and can never be revived. Furthermore, in Norway alone of these countries, it is possible to introduce a large proportion of the arms and equipment by sea.

11. We recommend, therefore, that in Norway a start should be made during the winter of 1941/2 in the introduction of arms and equipment for the secret army, subject to two conditions:-

(a) that they can be made available by the War Office without affecting our own armed forces;

(b) that they can be introduced into Norway by sea.

Demands on the Royal Air Force

12. The plan calls for a large effort on the part of the Air Force for the period ending 1st October, 1942. Subversive activities are mainly a complement to bombing and secret armies can never operate until bombing has first created suitable conditions. It would be unsound therefore to sacrifice the effectiveness of our bombing effort to these activities. Nor at present is it possible to judge how far in fact the sorties required will

prove to be necessary or practicable. We recommend in paras. 17-20 the machinery by which immediate needs might be met and future demands investigated. It is essential that provision of sorties for S.O.2 should not be allowed to interfere with the requirements of S.I.S.

13. In order to ensure the greatest economy in air effort, the Air Ministry should investigate with S.O.2. the provision of suitable aircraft and containers.

W/T Communications.

14. S.I.S. foresee no difficulties in the provision of W/T sets on the scale we understand the S.O.2 require, but the extension of this form of communication will raise demands for an increase in the W/T frequencies and the number of skilled wireless operators allotted to the S.I.S., or to S.O.2. if an independent organisation is set up under their direction. As the whole plan will depend on successful communications, and their establishment must necessarily form a commitment in the early stages, we feel that favourable consideration should be given to these demands.

Supply of Material.

15. The suitability of the weapons, etc. suggested requires further investigation by the War Office and S.O.2. The provision of some of this material before the spring of 1942 can only be effected at the expense of our own armed forces. The total quantities can only be supplied after that date. If our recommendations in para.8 are accepted the greater part of this material will not be needed before the summer of 1942 by which time the total requirements will have been more accurately estimated. We are of the opinion that provision of arms and equipment should be authorised now for the full programme of requirements for subversive activities. We suggest that only 25% of the requirements for Secret Armies should be provided by the spring of 1942.

Approach to Allied Governments.

16. We agree that the co-operation of allied Governments, or their representatives in this country, should be solicited. We presume that the approach to such Governments will be made through the Foreign Office and that assistance from allied armed forces will be obtained through the War Office.

Conclusions.

17. Although the paper put forward by the Minister of Economic Warfare is described as an "Outline Plan" we feel that in view of the many unpredictable factors involved, it should be regarded more in the nature of "A target to be aimed at". Whether or not it will be found practicable to attain this target either by the date specified or at all, will depend not only on the facilities given to S.O.2 but also on the degree of success met with in the early stages of organisation. Only when a start has been made will it be possible to judge what are the ultimate prospects of success. The essential thing, therefore, is to make a start.

18. At present a special flight is set aside for the uses of S.O.2 and S.I.S. We feel that if it were possible for the Air Ministry to make some immediate increase in these special facilities leading up during the course of the winter to a maximum of one squadron, it would be enough to enable S.O.2 to make an effective beginning both in subversive activities and in the organisation of secret armies.

19. If at any time S.O.2 needed additional facilities for some special purpose, it would be necessary for them to make application to the Air Ministry, who would have to decide whether to grant the request. It is suggested that the criteria to be applied by the Air Ministry in coming to a decision would be:-

(a) the value of the particular objective.

(b) the degree of success attained by S.O.2 in the past.

(c) the availability of aircraft at the time.

20. We believe that these recommendations, if accepted, will enable S.O.2 to make an effective start. Thereafter, it will be necessary to subject the progress made and the results achieved to a periodic review in the light of which recommendations as to future development would be made. This review might be undertaken by the Joint Planning Staff in conjunction with the Foreign Office and S.O.2.

Recommendations

21. We recommend that the Chiefs of Staff approve the plan in principle, subject to the following qualifications:-

(a) Subversive activities should be given preference over Secret Armies.

(b) Sabotage should be chiefly directed in accordance with the bombing policy aim.

(c) The Secret Armies proposed should be prepared in the following order of priority:

Northern France
Belgium
Holland
Norway - (but see (e) below).

(d) That during the winter 1941/42 the preparation of Secret Armies in Northern France, Belgium and Holland, should be limited to the introduction of essential organisers, and W/T sets.

(e) That during the winter of 1941/2 such arms and equipment as the War Office can make available without affecting our own forces should be introduced into Norway by sea.

(f) Material other than W/T sets should be provided for the full programme of subversive activities and, by the spring of 1942, for 25% of the requirements for secret armies in Northern France, Belgium and Holland.

22. We further recommend that the Chiefs of Staff should:-

(a) Invite the Air Ministry to consider the possibility of increasing the special facilities now available for S.O.2. and to review any application for further facilities in the light of the considerations set out in paragraph 19.

(b) Invite the Air Ministry to investigate with S.O.2. the provision of suitable aircraft and containers.

(c) Invite the War Office, in conjunction with S.O.2., to consider the suitability of the proposed equipment and to arrange the necessary provision.

(d) Instruct the Joint Planning Staff to review the progress of the plan from time to time, in conjunction with Foreign Office and S.O.2, and make recommendations as to further development.

(Signed) E.G.H. BELLARS.
W.F. DICKSON.
G.S. THOMPSON.

binet War Room,
9th August,1941.